

PROGRAM SUMMARY

Tribal Landowner Incentive Program (TLIP) funds will enhance the ability of the Yakama Nation Wildlife Resource Management (YNWRM) program to develop and implement shrub steppe management programs to benefit species of special conservation status and cultural significance. The shrub steppe management program goals are to restore and protect shrub steppe habitat for the benefit of obligate and facultative shrub steppe wildlife species of state, federal, and cultural concern.

More than 20 species with special state or federal conservation status rely on shrub steppe ecosystems (Appendix A). The shrub steppe of the Yakama Reservation supports a diverse native plant community that is occupied by one-third of these sensitive species in addition to numerous species of cultural significance including elk (*Cervus elaphus*), deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), and wild horses. Other species, such as the federally threatened middle Columbia steelhead and Lewis' woodpecker, occupy riverine and riparian areas protected by surrounding shrub steppe vegetation. The Yakama people use these lands for root gathering and for grazing under leases administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Less than one-half the Reservation shrub steppe vegetation has been mapped or evaluated as habitat for shrub steppe species of conservation and cultural concern. TLIP funds would allow assessment additional shrub steppe on the Yakama Reservation. Tribal Landowner Incentive Program (TLIP) funds will be used by the YNWRM program to:

- 1) Conduct vegetation sampling that will provide quantitative support to ongoing habitat assessments for 4 culturally and biologically significant species, identify areas in need of restoration work, and locate sites with substantial coverage of cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*) that pose significant fire risks that can degrade large areas of intact shrub steppe.
- 2) Construct grazing exclosures to monitor effects of grazing by native ungulates, livestock, and wild horses; and monitor natural recovery time following removal of grazing.
- 3) Obtain technologically advanced fire-fighting equipment to increase effectiveness and efficiency in the event of a wild fire in the shrub steppe.